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ABSTRACT

A study investigated whether teaching techniques and the use of self-evaluation tended to increase student motivation and second language proficiency. Subjects were 59 high school Honors Spanish 4 students with varying levels of academic ability, motivation, and proficiency, and included both non-native and English-dominant Spanish speakers. The foreign language program dropout rate reflected the low priority given to foreign language study. Analysis of probable causes and solutions suggested that treatment involving positive attitudes, cooperative learning, and use of multiple intelligence pedagogy would improve performance. Real-life application and self-evaluation helped to improve individual student's motivation. Results tended to support current research. Most of the subjects demonstrated significant growth in both oral and written proficiency in the target language. Their organizational skills and acceptance of personal responsibility improved. However, students with excessive absences from school did not benefit from the intervention. Posttest and attitudinal surveys revealed greater confidence and interest in developing foreign language proficiency. The instructional rubrics used were useful, but it was found that their design needed to be refined. The only aspect negative was that students tended to depend on class time to finish projects. The instructional rubrics, student surveys, and results are appended. (Contains 33 references.) (MSE)

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ED 435 171

AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT: STRATEGIES FOR MAXIMIZING PERFORMANCE IN THE DUAL-LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

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SIGNATURE PAGE

This project was approved by

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I would like to dedicate this research project to
my husband, my son and my daughter
for all the meals they prepared, the rooms they cleaned, and especially for
their expert advice.

Also, I must thank my friend, Anne, for her amazing computer expertise,
without which I would have been lost.

Finally, I must extend my gratitude to my Honors Spanish IV classes
for putting their whole heart and soul into each and every project.

Their cooperation made this project possible.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if teaching techniques and the use of self-evaluation tend to increase student motivation and proficiency in a second language. The targeted population consisted of Honors Spanish IV students who had varying levels of academic ability, motivation and proficiency. The group included both non-native and English –dominant Spanish speakers in a high school located southwest of a large midwestern city. The dropout rate in the foreign language program reflected the low priority given to the study of a second language.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that when a student's foreign language experience was limited to only a study of the structure and vocabulary lists with no personalization of the material, retention and interest was very low. Furthermore, many students didn't feel that learning a second language would change their lives, and that they personally had little control over their failures. The research also concluded that in the traditional classroom, there was a preoccupation with accuracy and error.

A review of solution strategies suggested that treatment involving positive attitudes, cooperative learning and MI strategies enhanced performance. Real-life application and self-evaluation helped improve the level of motivation of each individual student.

The results of the study tended to support current research. Most of the student participants demonstrated significant growth in both oral and written proficiency in the target language. Furthermore, their organizational skills and their acceptance of personal responsibility improved. However, those students with excessive absences from school did not benefit from the intervention. The results on the posttest as well as the attitudinal survey revealed greater confidence and interest in developing their foreign language proficiency. The rubrics were found to be useful; however, it was evident that their design, at times needed to be refined. Students were quite candid in their responses on the reflection logs. This gave the students and the teacher an opportunity to discuss issues that often are ignored. The only negative aspect of the study was the time element. Students tended to be too dependent on using only classroom time to complete projects.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Except for a few lucky immigrants, the majority of Americans are monolingual. The experience of most students in a foreign language class has been limited to conjugating verbs, trying to train their tongues to make foreign sounds, and memorizing lists of vocabulary. Consequently, students have low proficiency in free verbal response and writing. Evidence for the existence of the problem included interviews in which selected students were asked to explain why they chose to not continue their study of a foreign language. Observation, surveys, and assessments further indicated low student academic performance.

Immediate Problem Context

Demographics of School Population

The targeted high school is part of a community high school district composed of four public high schools whose student enrollment is drawn from all or part of ten suburbs located southwest of a large Midwestern city. This high school draws students from all or part of five suburbs. As shown in Table 1.1, the student body of 1,415 students is composed of such varied racial, ethnic, and cultural groups that no one group maintains a "majority" status (School Report Card, 1997).

Table 1.1
Racial/Ethnic Background of High School Students

35.2% European American
32.9% Hispanic American
31.8% African American
0.1% Asian/Pacific Islander American

The low income and mobility rates indicated in Table 1.2 show that many students come from families with limited financial and educational resources. Low-Income students are those students living in homes receiving public aid or eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. Overall the students enter school with a wide ranging educational foundation and academic proficiency, which causes a disparate range of interest in and dedication to formal education.

Table 1.2

Income, Mobility, and Graduation Rates

Category	*1995-96*	*1996-97*
Low income	38.1%	39.1%
Mobility	24.1%	31.2%
Dropout	7.1%	2.4%
Graduation	75.6%	76.4%

Furthermore, the dropout rate shows a decline; however, the graduation rate is deceiving. The graduation rate does not account for those students who do not graduate "on time" (with freshman entry class) but who continue school and graduate a summer, semester, a year, or even more after their classmates (School Report Card, 1997).

Attendance has a significant impact on academic success. The average daily attendance percentages for the last three years demonstrate a steady improvement. In fact, during the 1996-97 school year the attendance rate was 91.6%. An on-going conference and monitoring system for excessive absentees in grades 10 to 12 has been developed, as well as a freshman mentor program, and the Renaissance Program, consisting of

incentives to recognize improvement in attendance and grades. These programs provide positive connections among students, teachers, parents, and the community.

Within the total school population there are several academic subgroups. Over 40% of the students are in a "special needs" program: Title I, Special Education, Transitional Bilingual Education, and/or Limited English Proficient (LEP)/ Added to these are the gifted/academically talented, college-bound core curriculum, vocational/technical, and general education program students. Approximately 40% of the population is enrolled in a foreign language, but a significant number of this percentage are English-dominant Spanish speaking students studying levels II,III, IV< and V of Spanish. During the 1997-98 school year there was only one non-Spanish speaking student enrolled in Spanish IV, and the previous year there were five. All five levels of Spanish and French are offered, with German and Japanese being offered on a limited basis.

The college preparatory curriculum includes the recommendation, but not the requirement, of at least two years of foreign language study. A foreign language is considered an elective subject and must compete for enrollment with art, music, business, and vocational/technical courses.

It is the school's goal that within each calendar year students will improve by one grade equivalent year on standardized achievement tests, the Test of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP). Table 1.3 indicates that junior and senior students are meeting and/or exceeding this goal in most areas (School Report Card, 1997). For example, As freshman their reading level was 7.6; however, by the end of their sophomore year, their reading level (8.6) showed an increase of one year.

Table 1.3

Tap Grade Equivalent Scores

	Grade	10/95	10/96	Increase 95-96
Reading	9	7.6	7.9	—
	10	8.0	8.6	+1.0
	11	8.6	9.3	+1.3
	12	10.0	10.4	+1.8
Written Expression	9	8.0	8.3	—
	10	8.0	8.6	+0.6
	11	8.4	9.2	+1.2
	12	9.9	10.1	+1.7
Math	9	8.4	8.4	—
	10	8.7	9.3	+0.9
	11	9.9	10.3	+1.6
	12	11.7	12.1	+2.2
Social Studies	9	7.6	8.2	—
	10	7.9	8.6	+1.0
	11	8.4	8.9	+1.0
	12	10.6	10.8	+2.4
Science	9	8.5	8.9	—
	10	8.7	9.4	+0.9
	11	8.8	10.1	+1.4
	12	10.4	11.8	+3.0
Info Process.	9	8.2	8.5	—
	10	8.5	9.0	+0.8
	11	9.0	9.8	+1.3
	12	10.3	10.9	+1.9
Composite	9	8.2	8.4	—
	10	8.4	8.9	+0.7
	11	8.9	9.7	+1.3
	12	10.7	11.0	+2.1

It is recognized by the school and the district that technology training and access is crucial to student learning. Teachers have been given Internet training and provided with incentives to make use of the computer labs and software in the Learning Resources Center, counseling Center, and the classroom lab for content area usage. The Title I lab has ten new multi-media stations plus two Internet-dedicated stations. Two computers are dedicated to the ELLIS English Language Learning and Instruction System. This system provides one-on-one drill and practice for LEP students by providing interaction with native speakers in real-world situations.

Given the substantial number of students with special needs, support services, team –taught classes and accommodations continue to be revised and expanded. Teachers have received a newly revised "Accommodation Form" explaining the special provisions needed to assist special education students in regular program classes to be successful. Transitional Bilingual Education Department members also use special forms to make regular program teachers aware of students who are limited English proficient but not Hispanic. Incoming freshman students who are eligible for Title I services are contacted in the spring through the Outreach Initiative. This home visit program gives Title I staff an opportunity to discuss academic and behavior concerns with the parents and incoming freshman students. Students are invited to participate in a summer enrichment program.

As previously indicated, this high school has a racially and culturaly varied student body. Throughout the year, one weekly fifty-minute period is allocated for staff development concerns including multicultural education. Teachers have been encourage to include cultural-awareness in their content areas. REACH (Respecting Ethnic and Cultural Heritage) members serve as role models, and plan and provide activities on cultural diversity for the entire student population. "Unity Week" gives students and faculty an opportunity to participate in four informational workshops and/or entertainment sessions. Peer Helpers provide informational displays throughout the year, and Foreign Language students hold an annual "International Breakfast".

The districts operating expenditures per pupil for the current year is $10,087. However, class sizes have increased due to the Reduction in Force plan that was implemented due to district financial considerations. Classes with low enrollment are being discontinued or combined creating large numbers in multi-level classrooms. This

process has significant implications for curricula and materials selection. All upper-level language classes are combined levels.

The teaching and administrative staff only has token representation of diversity. Within the district 6.9% are Afro-American and only 2.5% are Hispanic. The average teaching experience is 20.9 years and 86.6% have a Master's Degree and above. As the number of certified staff decreases due to retirement, those leaving are not being replaced to the extent of departure. As a result, there has been an increase in teacher-student ratio. While the School Report Card indicates an average class size of 21, in most foreign language classes the ration in 30:1.

The Surrounding Community

This high school serves all or large portions of predominantly blue collar communities, which range from low income/poverty levels to middle income levels. Two suburbs are predominantly European-American. According to the 1990 census, one suburb is completely Afro-American and another is 25% Hispanic. Spanish is the predominant language spoken in the Hispanic homes, and while most are two-parent families, the highest level of education for many in sixth grade. There are many single parent families, which often include children not living with a biological parent. Low incomes, and variable work schedules often mean less parental supervision and involvement. Consequently, more emphasis is placed on work than school. The feeder schools within the district vary greatly with respect to program offerings and financial resources. Urban gang influences exist and create "gang bangers", "wannabes", and those who are intimidated.

National Context of Problem

Thanks to the efforts of many, foreign language was added to the Goals 2000 legislation. However, low proficiency and a lack of interest in continuing foreign language study beyond an introductory level persist as problems facing foreign language Educators. A variety of organizations have been meeting and discussing what high-performance workplaces require and what high-performance schools should produce. They are saying that tougher standards are necessary to prepare students for the next century. The Center for Applied Linguistics recently conducted a survey to determine if foreign language curriculum had changed as a result of the adaptation of national standards. Sixty-two percent of the respondents indicated an awareness of the standards and indicated that there was a greater emphasis on proficiency in their programs. Other respondents indicated a need to integrate culture, and a change to authentic assessment. In fact, over half of the schools noted that their curriculum reflected changes introduced by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) (Solomon, 1997).

However, there are some issues of concern to foreign language teachers regarding these changes. One of the problems is that students experience an increase in anxiety due to fear of public speaking. In fact, it is their anxiety which affects their decision to continue their study of the language or drop it (Maceri, 1995). In a questionnaire distributed in the Suffolk and Nassau Articulation Project, additional concerns were expressed. One of the problems was that students admitted to classes from other districts often were not at the same proficiency level. Also, many students were coming unprepared for oral work because the previous teacher did not use the communicative

method. Another concern that was expressed was that many students did not continue language their senior year. Finally, teachers noted that the Advanced Placement (AP) speaking requirement was not practical, and that university courses were too grammar oriented (Suffolk and Nassau Articulation Project, 1994).

As Diane Ging points out, the study of foreign language has always been available, but it has never maintained the statue foreign language study has held in other countries. She writes that valuing cultural diversity is a step in the right direction, but without a greater emphasis on developing proficiency, the increasing language gap will continue to undermine American competitiveness (Ging, 1994).

A greater problem for foreign language instructors is the teaching of Spanish to native speakers. The 1990 census indicates that the number of Spanish speakers in the United States increased from 11.3 million in 1980 to 17.3 million in 1990. The school afe population of Spanish speakers grew by 1.2 million or at a rate of 41%. This shift in population has had a significant impact on the teaching of Spanish in traditional foreign language classes. Spanish teachers are challenged to teach Spanish to monolingual English speakers in a class with students who already have some level of fluency. A priority for Spanish for Native Speakers is the incorporation of the linguistic varieties found in the community (Rodriguez, 1997)/ Actually, the term "Hispanic" refers to several groups with diverse backgrounds. Also some groups are recent immigrants and other individuals come from families whose ancestry in the United States dates back to the 1600s. Furthermore, according to the 1990 census 40% of Hispanic children live in poverty, compared to 13% of Caucasian children. As Linda Holman confirms, "These families face special challenges that can affect their children's ability to succeed in

school" (Holman, 1997,p.38). To not address the differences and special needs of children may cause a breakdown of the community.

The causes of students' lack of proficiency in a second language are many and varied. Researchers agree that the study of a second language has not been a priority in the United States. Consequently, the majority of American high school students do not study a foreign language at all. Of those who do, the two-year sequence for the college-bound student is considered sufficient.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

Evidence for the existence of low proficiency in the target language was documented via an attitudinal survey, a pretest, and interviews with a select group of students and parents. Both the survey and the interviews focused on student perception of what is required to become successful, on attitudes toward foreign language study, and on student learning style preferences. Students were also asked to explore possible sources and solutions to listening and speaking anxiety. The sample Advanced Placement pretest measured student proficiency in all four-language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The free-response and performance sections were evaluated using the guidelines established by the College Board. The targeted group of students was enrolled in an Honors Spanish IV program.

Attitudinal Survey

Within the first two weeks of school, students completed an attitudinal survey (see Appendix A). The questions covered their progress in developing proficiency in the target language, their organizational skills, and their general perception towards foreign language learning. The survey was designed in a "Strongly Disagree … Strongly Agree" format. The questions were divided into the following categories: organization and study skills, perceptions regarding language study, preferred learning style, listening/speaking anxiety, interest in real-life application, and preferred area of concentration.

Organization/Study Skills

An analysis of the responses regarding organization/study skills indicated that an overwhelming majority of students felt that some of the strategies previously used in selected foreign language classes to raise formal test scores have been beneficial (see Appendix B for survey results). The overwhelming majority of students agreed that the 10-minute test correction policy was beneficial. This policy allows students to take a second look at their test the following day and make any corrections or add any information they feel would improve their answers on a test. However, students were almost evenly divided as to whether a binder has improved their organizational ability. It was encouraging to note that a majority of students felt that they complete their homework on time (see Appendix B for survey results). The fact is, however, they often forget to bring their binder to class, and homework, on many occasions, is left in their locker. Fifty-three percent of the targeted students failed to complete the review homework that was assigned during the first two weeks of school

Perception Regarding Language Study.

The responses to Question #18 on the survey indicated that parents and counselors either expressed no opinion or are not recommending that students take four years of a language. Also a significant number of students felt that two much work was associated with language study. Peer influence did not seem to impact the decision of those who are enrolled in the Spanish IV class. An equal number either disagreed or had no opinion when asked if friends thought that taking more than two years of Spanish was a waste of time (see Appendix C for survey results).

Preferred Learning Style

It is apparent from the survey and teacher observation that those who have continued their study are doing so because they are friends and enjoy working together. Hence it was not surprising that the overwhelming majority also indicated that they prefer working in cooperative groups. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority prefers the use of visuals and realia when new vocabulary is introduced (see Appendix D for survey results).

Listening/Speaking Anxiety

The results regarding listening/speaking anxiety reflected the large number of English-dominant Spanish speakers in the class. Students who have limited opportunity to use the language outside of class experienced greater anxiety (see Appendix E for survey results). One student responded, "People speak too quickly and you panic that you won't catch everything." Another student commented, " I know lots of words and verb conjugations individually, but when they are put together, everything gets jumbled." Students also responded that when teachers' expectations were unrealistic or when teachers were inaccessible, their level of anxiety increased. In sum, student comments indicated that anxiety was associated with a lack of listening and speaking practice, and formal tests.

Interest in Real-life Application and Second Language

The categories measuring real-life application and area of concentration demonstrated that students who chose to remain in a foreign language class want to be able to communicate in Spanish and recognize the value in developing their communicative proficiency (see Appendix F for survey results). In fact, an overwhelming

majority felt that their ability to communicate has improved. No one strongly disagreed that performance tasks failed to help him or her improve their communicative proficiency. These tasks required students to use the target language for real-life communication. In fact, a large percentage felt that these real-life assessments were valuable (see Appendix F for survey results).

Preferred Area of Concentration

Students responded positively to developing the four language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. They also expressed a desire to expand their awareness of Hispanic culture. The overwhelming majority wishes to be able to orally communicate effectively and understands that the study of vocabulary and grammar is the means to that end (see Appendix G for results).

These six graphs indicate that the targeted groups of students do desire to improve their communication skills in the target language. Students generally feel that strategies that lower anxiety and increase opportunities for group interaction will help them achieve this goal. In sum, they recognize that the development of all four-language skills is necessary, and that cooperative group work and real-life performance tasks have increased their ability to communicate in target language.

Results of AP Pretest

While the majority of students indicated that their goal was to become more fluent in the target language, then, as the pretest indicated, additional means will be required to improve their communicative proficiency. Questions from a previously administered AP test were used to design the AP language pretest. The examination was divided into two sections, a multiple-choice section and a free-response section. The multiple-choice

section measured a student's knowledge of spoken Spanish, knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and understanding of a nonliterary prose selection. The free-response questions enabled students to demonstrate their mastery of the language and allowed for creativity.

The intent of the picture sequence and the oral free-response section of the test were to evaluate the students' proficiency in oral narration and ability to give appropriate responses to a variety of questions. In general, all English –dominant Spanish speakers scored within the 7-8 range indicating a good command of the language. The non-native speakers were in the 5-6 range, which indicated an ability to narrate the story with some fluency and a moderate range of vocabulary. The majority, however, still had some errors of syntax.

The paragraph and verb fill-in section was difficult for all the students. The English-dominant Spanish speakers committed more mistakes than the non-native speakers due to pervasive errors in orthography.

The majority of students attained a passing score on the multiple-choice reading section. Difficulty with inferential questions and vocabulary was the cause of error in this section.

Giving free-responses proved to be more difficult. On the oral section, the students were not able to expand their responses without a good deal of hesitancy. Finally, in evaluating the essays, the majority of students demonstrated an inability to clearly express their ideas. Communication seemed to be impeded by a lack of vocabulary, and an inability to expand their ideas in a logical and well-supported manner. Several essays had persistent errors in syntax, vocabulary or grammar. It was

encouraging though that none of the responses was totally off-task or merely a restatement of the question (see Appendix H for results).

Responses From Interviews

Interviews with students who had previously been successful academically but chose not to continue in Spanish indicated that conflict with other isolate courses, a perception that only two years of study was necessary for college admission, and too much work influenced their decision. None of the students interviewed felt that learning a language was boring. In fact, they said that they enjoyed the performance-based tasks especially when they focused on personal experiences. Regrettably, they felt that these tasks required too much time outside of class, and yet they agreed that if the workload were reduced, their ability to use the language would also be more limited.

Students who had only experienced a minimum degree of success or failed gave several reasons for their lack of achievement. While some mentioned that the presentation of the material was boring in some classes, others resented having English-dominant Spanish speakers in the same class with non-native speakers. The vast majority, however, also acknowledged that they procrastinated and were generally unwilling to make the effort to study or complete daily homework and performance tasks. In a few cases, after school jobs and participation in sports were reasons given for poor performances in the classroom. Chronic absenteeism also contributed to the lack of success of several students. Hence, in the majority of cases, the students themselves were responsible for their lack of success.

Additional insight was gained through interviews with parents of students enrolled in the Title I Outreach Program, which targets incoming freshman whose

standardized test scores have placed them at least two years below grade level. These interviews suggested that Latino children were not encouraged to become independent. Furthermore, these parents did not consider it their responsibility to monitor schoolwork, and they did not have any long-range educational plans. However, their lack of communication with teachers was not from lack of interest, but rather a lack of confidence. Invariably, they would apologize for their lack of education, generally no more than sixth grade.

Probable Causes (site based)

Regardless of the differences between the students in the targeted high school, there is a striking similarity in their perception of foreign language acquisition. While the goal of becoming communicatively proficient in the target language has occurred to some of them, the amount of effort that they must invest in the process has eluded them. While most students express initial curiosity towards learning another language, their reason for remaining in a foreign language classroom is to fulfill college admission requirements, or to fulfill the "elective" requirement for high school graduation. Analysis of probable cause data indicates that students lack proficiency because of time constraints, an inability on the part of the students to adapt to a less teacher-directed approach, an outmoded text, and a lack of intrinsic motivation. Evidence of these probable causes was found in the targeted school and in the review of literature.

The lack of time continues to impede the progress of non-native students. It is unrealistic to assume that non-native students will become proficient in a second language when there are 31 students in a class clamoring for an opportunity to speak. Furthermore there is no language laboratory to facilitate the development of listening and

speaking skills. Lack of time also impedes writing proficiency. The opportunity for peer editing is limited when time must also be devoted to introducing new material, practicing these concepts, and testing the new material.

Furthermore, participation in a performance-based class forces students to take more responsibility for their own learning. Several students lack the discipline to succeed. They experience difficulty with pacing themselves and staying on task during cooperative group and independent class time. Although they may appear motivated, they flounder due to a lack of self-discipline and organizational skills. Moreover, many of the students refuse to do any work outside of class. Unsatisfactory notices, phone calls to parents, and detentions for coming unprepared have no lasting effect on their diligence. Instead, their common complaint has been that the time allotted for activities was insufficient and the amount of guidance was inadequate.

While the district recently adopted the new McDougal-Littell foreign language instructional package for the first and second year levels, students in the upper levels are still working with an outdated text series. The focus of their text is on discreet points of grammar, and lists of impractical vocabulary and expressions. There are no video components and the audio component merely consists of further drill practice. In other words, it is not user friendly if the goal is to develop communicative competence.

In order to develop a more real-life focus, materials from supplementary sources are used. The teacher is constantly challenged to create and implement a more authentic approach to learning a second language in order to promote student interest. This fragmented approach is frustrating to the teacher and students.

Probable Causes (literature)

Robert LaBouve, Texas State Department of Education, states, "I do not believe we can safely assume that students are going to line up for foreign language classes in breathless anticipation of becoming competent in another language" (LaBouve, 1994 p. 26).

Nevertheless, it can be reasonably argued that proficiency in the Spanish language is critical to the United States as we move toward becoming a bilingual nation. The Hispanic minority population is likely to become the majority in the 21st century, and our close proximity to Latin America increases the need to become proficient in the language. Despite this fact, Americans have been unable to address the xenophobia that is so prevalent in this country.

Donna Christian, President of the Center for Applied Linguistics, contends that the public's perception of foreign language study is that if you are not going to use it, why study it? Enrollment figures presented at the ACTFL Conference in 1992 reflect this sentiment. According to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language, 4.25 million students or only 38.4% of high school students were studying a foreign language. Furthermore, it was stated that schools are being judged on how well students are achieving in reading, writing, and math. When students are not doing well in these areas, foreign language takes a backseat. What happened in North Carolina gives evidence of this fact. In 1985 North Carolina mandated that the study of a foreign language is essential for a basic education. However, schools have delayed in complying with this mandate and there is no penalty for failure to implement the mandate (Checkley, 1996).

The cliché administrators, parents and counselors are still reiterating is, "I studied a foreign language for two years and can't say a word!" Their perception and the message that they convey to students is that the study of a foreign language is solely for the purpose of meeting college entrance requirements (Brown, 1995). Their experiences have been limited to traditional methodology, namely, vocabulary lists, conjugating verbs, and countless worksheets. As students, they learned the structure of the target language and some basic vocabulary through memorization and through writing; however, retention through this approach was very low. The scenario presented in an article by Scott Willis typified the traditional classroom. In this article, Lynn Sandstedt, executive director of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, was quoted calling the classroom contrived and far from exciting: "What is this?" or "How is the weather?" questions, and dialogues like "Anita and Tomas en la biblioteca" are typical examples. In an advanced class, students may spend a week doing drills and worksheets using the subjunctive tense, followed by a test of all the uses of this verb form (Willis, 1996).

The teacher-researcher and other foreign language teachers in the surrounding communities recently participated in a survey. They provided interesting and thoughtful responses to questions concerning student motivation and the focus necessary for the development of communicative proficiency. Nearly half the teachers felt that students were unwilling to work diligently enough to develop proficiency in the target language. Furthermore, 33% concurred that American high school students were disinterested in authentic language acquisition. While the majority of teachers expressed an interest in developing communicative proficiency, 68% also admitted that most of their language

classes did not provide students with opportunities necessary for the development of authentic communication.

Researchers argue that the best curriculum and methodology will have little effect on student performance if students and teachers fail to recognize their own emotions, empathize with peers, and deal with crises. Says Daniel Goleman, "If you are a kid who wants to avoid depression or violence and not dropout, academic topics will have nothing to do with it" (Ratnesar, 1997 p. 24). In another interview, Goleman explained how failure becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy because the working memory cannot manage both extreme anxiety and the demands of retrieving the information necessary to pass a test or complete a project (O'Neil, 1996).

William Glasser concurred that these "at-risk" students are uncommitted to deferred gratification and to school practices that reflect competition and its reward status. He further suggested that the number one problem facing educators today is that over 50% of the students have no desire to learn what we are teaching. After questioning students about what was most important to them, he concluded that secondary schools don't put forth enough effort to make kids feel that they can interact with each other, and that they are important contribution members to classroom activities (Brandt, 1988).

Current research reveals a certain amount of confusion between second language acquisition and formal second-language learning. Researchers are also investigating whether anxiety is counterproductive to language learning. The theory of language acquisition proposed by Steven Krashen (1981) is that when a learning situation produces fear or anxiety, acquisition cannot occur. Krashen further states that conscious learning

does not necessarily improve acquisition. In other words, fluency occurs only with active communication; formal study is useful only to alter what one produces.

In another study conducted by Zeidner and Bensoussan, students evaluated tests and the anxiety level these tests produced. The students concluded that written tests were more pleasant and produced less anxiety than oral exams. Nevertheless, it was students' negative attitude toward the tests that resulted in a lack of success. After reviewing their evidence, Thomas Matthews concluded that when some students perceive the importance of the material, anxiety increases the level of optimal tension and students actually perform better (Mathews, 1996).

Further research in foreign or second language learning has concluded that listening and speaking produce the greatest amount of anxiety, and this anxiety undermines any desire or motivation. According to surveys, learners believe that to be "good" at learning a foreign language, it is necessary to have perfect pronunciation, an extensive vocabulary, command of the grammar, experience studying abroad, and a natural aptitude for language (Vogely, 1998). Because of the "negative" perception, most learners have difficulty comprehending because of a lack of self-confidence. Furthermore, according to Vogely, teachers do very little to improve listening comprehension because they think listening is a passive skill that will just "happen" (Vogely, 1998).

Tests are designed to discriminate proficiency, progress and achievement. Students are quickly categorized as "good" or "bad" language learners. Testing, therefore, discourages "weak" learners' potential for success. In testing, there is a preoccupation with accuracy and error. Furthermore, the traditional classroom focuses

on the grade students are receiving. The so-called "bad" learner becomes bored and feels out of control in this teacher-centered, impersonal, textbook driven setting (Prodromou, 1995).

Diverse cultural learning styles add to the complexity of the problem. In general, researchers have found that Mexican-American children seek personal relationships with their teacher and are more comfortable with broad concepts than discrete points and specifics. The traits common to most African-American children suggest a learning style that would benefit from more active projects and collaborative work. Only white Americans value working independently, analytic thinking and accuracy. These traits are reflected in approaches used in most American schools, namely, tests, competition, grades, and linear logic (Guild, 1994). As a result, when the learning style doesn't match, students have a limited opportunity to use their strengths in the classroom. The results, then, may be underachievement and low self-esteem.

In conclusion, recent research demonstrates that communicative proficiency and student motivation involves several key aspects. First, proficiency involves performance and student creativity. Secondly, a distinction between "fluency" and proficiency must be recognized. In other words, a reasonable level of communicative proficiency is attainable, but as Willis (1996) found, grammar study alone will not help to develop language proficiency. However, when students are given opportunities to use the language in meaningful contexts, they will be able to communicate for real-life purposes. Furthermore the foreign language classroom is an empowering place where acceptance of all students for who they are should not be ignored. Perhaps the most crucial aspect is the amount of control the students have over their foreign language learning. This involves a

shift in teacher/student roles and sets the stage for exploration of a variety of strategies to facilitate authentic language acquisition.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Research concludes that foreign language programs will stagnate unless there is a change to a more student-centered approach. In other words, teachers need to work to provide students with a more usable control of a language for practical purposes. As William Glasser concludes, effective learning involves the interaction of the individual students, the expectations, and the methods of instruction (Jenkins, 1995). Hence, the attainment of authentic and communicative foreign language proficiency requires a focus on intrinsic motivation. According to research, giving attention to multiple intelligences, utilizing cooperative learning strategies, and the use of "authentic assessment" in the form of performance-based systems is perhaps the most effective way of helping students to improve their foreign language proficiency.

Spence Rodgers suggested in a presentation for target school in 1997 that the struggle is not in how to increase student motivation but instead educators need to focus on creating lessons and classroom environments that promote students' intrinsic motivation, and then, hopefully students will become actively engaged in learning. Rodgers introduced several standards for maximizing student motivation. First, students must believe that learning is valuable, involving and enabling. Moreover, students must feel successful and the environment must be safe and caring. In order to achieve this, the learning environment must protect students from embarrassment, and the instructional practices must meet their diverse learning styles. Rodgers further stated that these

standards can be met if the activities are interesting, meaningful, and if students are experiencing regular evidence of progress.

Daniel Goleman's research further confirms that the development of emotional smarts underlies success in the classroom. His findings suggest that lagging scores in math and reading are tied to emotional illiteracy. He cites a program in New Haven that includes emotional training lessons through 12th grade to teach children how to recognize and manage their emotions. Critical to the success of any program, however, are teachers who model emotional intelligence in caring respectful interactions with their students (O'Neil, 1996).

Critics of the current state of education in public schools also state that the way to improve schools and prepare students for jobs is through achievable standards. Kendall and Marzano (as cited in Jenkins, 1995) have been working on identifiable content standards and benchmarks. They have concluded that a good approach is to consider a selected number of benchmarks as exemplars of the standards rather than attempt to complete all of the standards and all of the benchmarks. These benchmarks are not graded and students are given goals with much flexibility in reaching them. While this idea is similar to the approach being implemented at the Key school in Indianapolis, Indiana, it has been modified at the high school level to label these standards as essential, desirable, and quest. The essential standards would be identified for each level, but the desirable standards would not be required of all students. Quest is similar to what the Key school labels projects (Jenkins, 1995).

According to research, the standards and benchmarks must be considered in conjunction with other variables such as background, learning style, instructional methods, and the time period allotted for learning. In order to make connections with expectations for success, a more personalized approach is considered necessary. In fact, as Wallace states, a teacher's ability to relate to students can literally make or break a program. He states, " Simply knowing the language as a native or a proficient non-native is not enough. The success of a program will need a person who can appeal to students and, when necessary, to the management of the school"(as cited in Ging, 1994).

A Yale study concluded that intelligence has analytical, creative, and practical aspects. When programs value all three, more students experience success. Results from this study showed that when instruction matched the students' pattern of abilities, students did better. Furthermore, by measuring creative and practical abilities, researchers were better able to measure performance. They further concluded that when a statistical analysis of abilities were done, IQ was not a valid means of predicting success. By appreciating and recognizing a broader base of abilities (creative and practical) the number of achievers in the classroom were more racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse (Sternberg, 1997).

Educators have been presented many models of multiple intelligence teaching. However, they all share the premise that a school is responsible for helping all students discover and develop their talents or strengths. Linda Campbell points out that multiple intelligences does not require a total change in curriculum; it is a framework for developing lesson designs, student projects, assessments, and coordinating interdisciplinary units. In other words, multiple intelligences does not provide a

prescription which dictates how and what to teach. Whatever framework is employed, the result is that a child's enthusiasm for learning is awakened, and the effort required to master skills and gain information and for being inventive is encouraged (Campbell, 1997).

While learning styles and brain-based education are two other fields of study, within the classroom the application of these theories overlaps Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Pat Guild concluded that each of these theories is learner centered. In other words, they promote personalization of the learning and reflection about the process and as a part of assessing the outcome. Each of these theories also promotes diversity. Guild concludes that the application of these theories have a positive impact for teachers and students (Guild, 1997)

In an article written by Harvey Silver, Richard Strong and Matthew Perini, several strategies were given in order to integrate these theories. First, for each of the intelligences, they established a set of abilities – mastery, interpersonal, understanding, and self-expression. Next, they listed vocations for people who fit a particular profile. A list of products was also included to help students select a product that a person with a particular strength of learning style might create. However, in order to use this integrated approach, the reader was reminded that their menu was merely a guide and that focus should be on one intelligence while giving students a choice on style and assessment. Lastly, by giving students a choice in how they want to communicate their understanding, students will discover something about themselves (Silver, Strong, and Pirini, 1997).

Educators who have successfully implemented the cooperative learning approach to teaching have found that students were taking a more active role in the learning process, developing social skills, and achieving at a higher level. At a training workshop given by the Chicago Tribune and the Illinois Research Center, Jeanette Dailey presented several ways to effectively use cooperative learning in the classroom. She cited several rationales for using this structured approach to teaching developed by Spencer Kagan; namely, this approach fosters positive interdependence, assures, individual accountability, and increases student involvement. She further stated that for many non-English background students, cooperative learning is particularly effective in encouraging involvement. In addition, the teacher might get more feedback and have a greater opportunity for student observation (Dailey, 1997).

Ellen Carr and Donna Ogle, two other participants in the workshop, combined cooperative learning and the use of graphic organizers. They found that their strategies like the K-W-L-Plus engaged readers in constructing meaning from the text and fostered student independence by developing their transfer skills. They further pointed out that students' self-concept is enhanced when they have concrete evidence that they are able to elicit information from a text (as presented at the training workshop, 1998).

Research confirms that cooperative learning is another component necessary for student success. However, attentions must be given to individual accountability and to the development of interpersonal and small-group social skills. In an article written by Johnson and Johnson the steps for social skill development were outlined. As with any learning process, students need to practice the skill and then reflect on how well and how frequently they were using the skill (Johnson and Johnson, 1990).

If instructional strategies and curriculum are going to reflect a performance orientation, then assessment needs to change as well. First of all, as Jay McTighe indicates in his article, performance tasks provide a more valid indication of what students have learned because they require real-life application. Secondly, the actual process and the content are considered equally important. Essential to the process is consideration of student attitude and perceptions toward learning. In other words, teachers must provide students with clear guidelines that demonstrate the elements of quality work. Exemplars that show students what quality work looks like are as necessary as providing students with scoring rubrics or lists of criteria to demystify the process. And finally, there needs to be ongoing feedback throughout the learning process to ensure that assessment enhances the performance not just measures it (McTighe, 1997)

Grant Wiggens summarizes the value of performance-based learning by explaining that the "test" of any ability of knowledge should be the entire process and not something that is done "after the fact". He confirms that a well-developed performance bases assessment program will provide multiple pieces of information gained over the course of several performances. These performances give teachers and students an opportunity to observe, reflect and improve their understanding of the material and themselves (Wiggins, 1993)

In sum, it appears that the application and the interaction between Gardner's multiple intelligence theory, cooperative learning strategies and performance-based assessment is the most powerful and effective way to enhance student learning and understanding. Most importantly, since there can never be a formula for reaching each

individual child, the open- endedness of this approach should make it easier to personalize education.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of increased instructional emphasis on the performance assessment process during the period of September 1998 to January 1999, the targeted Spanish IV students will increase their proficiency in the targeted language as measured by teacher-constructed tests and reviews of student projects.

In order to accomplish the project objective, the following processes are necessary.

1. Challenging but manageable instructional activities that match the learning styles and multiple intelligences of the students will be developed.
2. Meaningful choices will be provided, whenever possible, for student activities.
3. Scoring rubrics will be designed to develop high standards and expectations while protecting students from embarrassment.
4. Non-judgmental feedback that focuses on progress and growth will be frequently given.
5. Effective cooperative learning techniques will be implemented.
6. Knowledge and sensitivity to other cultures will be developed through expanded interpersonal skills.

Project Action Plan

Weeks 1 & 2: Pre-survey

A pretest of the four language skills will be administered. Students will also discuss and participate in a MI inventory. The teacher-researcher will interview students to discuss their previous language learning experiences.

Friday: Listening and speaking emphasis using the video series, "La Catrina".

Group Assignment: In their newly formed base groups, students will design their folder and participate in a cooperative group assignment to introduce each other to the whole class. The use of scoring guideline, class expectations and general rules will be discussed. These activities will allow time for teacher observation.

Weeks 3 –5:Real-life application of vocabulary & grammar

Each base group (based on MI survey) will draw a life-size body and label the body parts including any particular physical features. The unit vocabulary will then be used to describe this "person". Students will then create a real-life conversation to describe this "persons" visit to the doctor, emergency room, or dentist. Evaluation will be based on established rubrics, and a formal test.

Students will complete their cooperative group and self-evaluation of their performance on the test.

Fridays: Continue listening and speaking emphasis using the video series, "La Catrina".

Weeks 6 & 7: Certificado de Merito

This lesson will begin with direct instruction of the present perfect tense usage and form. Lessons will be personalized and students will participate in some cooperative group activities. In a paired interview students will gather information in order to create a certificate of merit. Active listening will be encouraged during the awards ceremony. A formal test and self-evaluation form will be completed.

Weeks 8-10: Pop Culture

Preparation for El Dia de los Muertos activities and reading selections will be discussed and presented using cooperative learning activities and graphic organizers. Students will be responsible for collecting, analyzing, and ultimately using their information. Individual and group work samples will be evaluated using scoring guideline.

Films and excerpts for works by Isabel Allende and Pablo Neruda will be used.

Week 9: Quarterly assessment

Students will meet with the teacher to discuss the language survey and class participation evaluation forms. Students will also select and submit individual writing samples. A class meeting will be held.

Weeks 11-13: Real-life application of past and future tenses.

Each base-group will develop a direct instruction lesson using their MI assignment to present a review of previously learned grammar (verb tenses). Evaluation will be base on established rubrics and a formal test. Students will complete their cooperative group and a PMI reflection log.

Individual students will design a Past-Present-Future personal collage with a writing component. The explanation of the items included in the collage will be orally presented to the class. A pair/share strategy will be used to check writing. Students will record and comment on information gathered during the oral presentations for bonus points. In small groups students will compare their findings, and then will complete a wrap-around to share highlights of their base group discussion. Rubrics and an active listening observation checklist will be used to assess the activity.

Weeks 14 –16: Indigenous cultures

This lesson is designed to develop vocabulary and cultural awareness. Students will participate in a variety of hand-on activities using MI strategies. Role-play will be another strategy used and students will have a choice of reading selections. Evaluation will be based on projects, and skits and students will have an opportunity to develop their own scoring guidelines. Following the activity, students will complete a reflective journal entry.

Methods of Assessment

In order to determine the effects of this intervention, the teacher will complete observation checklist with anecdotal notes, and review the students' self-evaluation and journal entries. Because subject work is a vital part of this data, group portfolios and individual student binders will be kept. Throughout the intervention, a pre- and post- test will also be administered. Scoring guidelines will be developed and reflective logs will be completed. These will provide insight into the development of proficiency and the level of motivation of each individual student.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve proficiency in the target language by giving attention to authentic assessment practices, multiple intelligences, and utilizing cooperative learning strategies. The targeted group of students was enrolled in an Honors Spanish IV program.

Prior to the intervention, the participants completed an attitudinal survey (Appendix A) and a multiple intelligences survey developed by David Lazear (1995). To assess their proficiency, students took a previously administered Advanced Placement test that measured the four language skills. The results were used to form diverse cooperative base groups based on a mix of MI and a blend of heritage and monolingual speakers. Following the intervention, the AP Test and the attitudinal survey were re-administered.

In order to develop a strategy for transcending the barriers of communication and differences, the results from the Multiple Intelligences survey, the MI scavenger hunt (Appendix I), the proficiency test, and the attitudinal survey were also used to design performance-based tasks and reflection devices. Consequently, the target group became involved in a multi-component assessment system, which the teacher used to design lessons to improve their communicative proficiency. They completed several thematic performance-based tasks as well as other more informal practice designed to improve their ability to express themselves in the target language. The performance-based tasks that were completed during the first semester of 1998-99 included:

1) Creation and labeling of a life-sized body with a paired conversation to describe this "person's" visit to the doctor, emergency room, or dentist.
2) Certificado de Merito (Appendix J), a description of past accomplishments.
3) Creation of an Ofrenda to explain the celebration of El Dia de los Muertos.
4) Present-Past-Future descriptive essay with an oral presentation, to give the students an opportunity to learn something about themselves and each other.
5) Projects performed to demonstrate awareness of indigenous cultures.

While the experiences gained in the previous activities were designed to help students write and speak more effectively, attention was also given to developing cultural literacy. The video series, "La Catrina", provided students with authentic listening opportunities. Music and films were other supplementary materials that were selected to kindle and sustain the students' curiosity. These performance tasks incorporated all four components of language learning, speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Students were given a variety of options, so that their presentations would utilize their dominant intelligences. Some of the students wrote poetry while others chose to illustrate comic book summaries of one of the stories they had read. Other groups created puppet shows, and one very musically talented group undertook the task of writing a "musical" to be presented as part of the school's Unity Week celebration. These tasks served as the core of the intervention and were designed to correlate with the district's foreign language curriculum. All of the concepts were introduced using cooperative learning strategies and multiple intelligences, particularly interpersonal and intrapersonal, visual/spatial, musical/rhythmic, body/kinesthetic and verbal/linguistic.

The researcher assessed the units in the intervention in a variety of ways. One or more of the following methods was used for each unit: performance-based assessments, rubrics, student conferencing, observation, and formal tests.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

The results of this intervention appear to indicate that students improved their oral and writing proficiency in the target language through the use of proficiency-based tasks that included scoring guidelines and opportunities for self-monitoring. In other words, students who participated in this intervention were involved in structured but meaningful personal interactions. The use of cooperative base groups seemed to provide opportunities for low-threat student-to student practice that was regarded as motivational and enjoyable.

Performance-Based Tasks

The life-sized body activity was the first opportunity for the cooperative base groups to work together. Because this activity utilized previously learned grammatical structures, they were able to concentrate on authentic communication and practice their cooperative learning skills. The results were interesting and often funny as students were given an opportunity to unleash their creativity.

The Certificate of Merit and the real-life application of Present, Past and Future projects gave students an opportunity to learn something about themselves and each other. As the students participated with their partners and other classmates, it became apparent that they were making discoveries regarding how to actually apply the grammar that they had learned in an authentic situation. Their rough drafts and finished products indicated that communicative proficiency was developing. Moreover, the active listening

during class presentations and paired activities helped provide emotional security with the language. This was particularly important for the non-native speakers as they came to realize that errors are natural but that they were still able to communicate.

Perhaps the highlight of this intervention was the willingness on the part of the students to showcase their knowledge of indigenous cultures. Their cultural projects were later enthusiastically shared with the entire school. It is believed that they were more motivated because the options for sharing their knowledge appealed to multiple intelligences and varying abilities. In sum, the historical background that was emphasized reflected the interest and the proficiency level of the students.

Authentic Assessment Tools

Assessment in this intervention involved the development of on-going multilevel strategies. In other words, the teacher developed scoring guidelines (Appendices K and L) and provided exemplars which established a framework for monitoring student progress. Moreover, students were more involved in the decision making as to what constituted quality work and both the teacher and the students were given feedback as to the progress students were making. In addition, after the units of instruction, students were given opportunities to self-assess their performance.

It is, therefore, believed that listening and speaking proficiencies improved due to the method of evaluation. Periodically students were asked to perform a short conversation task. Written notes were not allowed. A simple scoring rubric was used to evaluate their progress, and, at the same time, classmates recorded active listening notes in their binders. Participation points were given based on the feedback that these conversations generated. Because students knew that they were not being "graded", they

tended to feel less nervous, and as a result, better able to communicate naturally in the target language. To increase their awareness of quality work, when students were required to perform for a grade, classmates completed evaluations. For the most part, these evaluations were thoughtful and fair. Overall, the daily practice sessions led to improved proficiency.

There was also measurable improvement in writing through the use of peer editing. For the most part students worked on short (five to ten sentence) paragraphs. As part of a schoolwide initiative, students were given a departmental scoring guideline and a key indicating lexical, syntactical, and organizational errors (Appendix M). Initially, students protested. Comments like, "I can't believe I have to do this again!" were frequently heard. Gradually, however, they began to realize that the writing practice was not an option, and that peer editing was both helpful and "enjoyable". As the quality of their work improved, comments like, "Wow! I actually corrected most of my own mistakes!" were heard.

Their reflection logs and checklist self-assessments provided a wider range of evidence that the students were becoming more competent, purposeful language users. They remarked that the blended groups and the daily exposure to the language in "real" situations reduced their listening and speaking anxiety (Appendix E). Their reflection logs also revealed that the color and the shape of the paper or designs that they were encouraged to draw inspired them to write more creatively and to write more lengthy paragraphs. They also seemed to like it when they could use markers and when their graphic organizers no longer looked like a typical assignment. Consequently, they went to great lengths to illustrate and write their responses. In sum, it is believed that their

willingness to participate was generated by the fact that the variety of approaches to assessment was more responsive to the differing learning styles of the students.

Comparison of Pre- and Post- AP Test Results

In order to assess the effectiveness of this intervention, a posttest was administered. The posttest, identical to the pretest, measured the four language skills. Table 4.1 compares pretest and posttest scores.

Table 4.1

Results of the AP Proficiency Exam: n = (59 students in intervention)

Score	Picture Sequence		Listening/Speaking		Paragraph & Verb fill-in		Essay		Reading	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
9	7	10	7	10	0	0	0	0	0	2
7 or 8	17	15	17	15	0	5	0	5	10	19
5 or 6	15	20	10	20	10	20	10	17	20	15
3 or 4	13	10	15	9	25	16	17	20	20	15
2 or 1	7	4	10	5	24	18	32	17	9	8
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Generally speaking there was an overall improvement in the written and oral free-response sections of the test. In fact, a score of 3 or higher on any portion of the test was a good indication that the student would receive credit on an official AP Exam. It should

be noted that scores within the 9 and 7 or 8 range only included the heritage speakers in the targeted group. Moreover, the majority of those who scored in the 5-6 range were also heritage speakers; however, this range also included four students who began their language acquisition with the teacher-researcher four years ago. The oral proficiency scores of 2 or 1 only included non-native speakers; whereas, the writing and reading scores were a mix of non-native and English-dominant Spanish speakers of limited proficiency in the target language. Nevertheless, the teacher-researcher feels that the scoring on AP Exams tends to be more stringent than assessment in an introductory college level course; therefore, even those who received a 2 on any portion of the exam would probably be successful in comparable courses in most colleges.

The improvement in the oral and written portions suggests a clearer understanding of what was expected. That is, through guided practice, they had become more aware that the picture-sequence portion required the telling of a sequence of events rather than just a listing of details. Moreover, several students were able to self-correct some of their errors and there was less hesitancy in their speech. The improvement in writing demonstrated that the majority of students had good control of elementary structures as well as some more complex structures. There was also improvement in organization and the use of appropriate transitional words. The vocabulary in the middle range essays was simply but adequate. The essays at the low end of demonstrating competence in writing, however, were the result of the frequent errors in orthography and interference from English. Scores were also lower on papers shorter than 200 words.

Impact of the Use of Multiple Intelligences

It is believed that proficiency increased because students were able to use their preferred mode of learning. These preferences were discovered through the MI survey. In addition, the MI scavenger hunt gave students an opportunity to discover the similarities and differences among them and to become aware of their own preferences. By targeting their perceived strengths, the teacher-researcher was able to quickly engage students in the unit of study. It was also observed that students approached a task with more self-confidence resulting in fewer complaints and less procrastination. In other words, by sparking their interest and motivation, they were more willing to invest academic effort. Table 4.2 indicates the students' perception of their dominant intelligences.

Table 4.2

Results of the MI Survey

Multiple Intelligences Self-Analysis - 45 Students Surveyed							
	Composite Score						
	30–25	24–20	19–15	14–10	9–5	4–0	No Answer
Verbal-Linguistic	53.30%	22.20%	15.60%	4.50%	2.20%	2.20%	0
Logical-Mathematical	48.90%	31.10%	13.30%	6.70%	0	0	0
Visual-Spatial	37.80%	37.80%	13.30%	8.90%	2.20%	0	0
Bodily-Kinesthetic	40%	33.40%	13.30%	11.10%	2.20%	0	0
Musical-Rhythmic	57.70%	17.80%	17.80%	4.50%	0	2.20%	0
Interpersonal	82.20%	11.10%	6.70%	0	0	0	0
Intrapersonal	73.30%	8.90%	13.30%	0	4.50%	0	0
Naturalist	24.50%	13.30%	13.30%	2.20%	6.70%	11.10%	28.90%

The above mentioned survey gave students an opportunity to analyze the relative strengths of their eight ways of learning. Students evaluated how well they used the skills or a capacity listed under each of the intelligences by using the scale that was provided. Each item had a number between 0 and 10. Students then totaled the numbers for each intelligence. This figure revealed the development of each of the intelligences.

The teacher-researcher selected several students to serve as benchmarks in order to observe any correlation between their perceived strengths and the development of language proficiency. For example, those who ranked themselves very high in logical-mathematical may have understood grammatical and spelling patterns more quickly but they were more reticent when it came to applying their knowledge in free-response activities. In fact, one student commented that he was only concerned with his grade on formal tests. The relationship was stronger between performance-based tasks and the verbal/linguistic, and interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. Moreover, for the large proportion of students enrolled in this class who had acquired language skills outside of this classroom, it was the opportunity to use their visual/spatial and musical/rhythmic intelligences that was useful in getting them to focus on polishing their previously acquired skills. Consequently, it appeared that those who were enthusiastically participating did so because they were using what they perceived as their dominant intelligence.

Use of Cooperative Learning Strategies

It was exciting to observe the bonding that occurred within the base groups as the heritage speakers, whose home language was Spanish, actively interacted with the monolingual students. Gradually the monolingual students shared that they felt less

frustrated and that it was easier to understand native speakers. One student wrote in his journal, "I find myself asking and answering questions in Spanish, which I never did before." Another English-dominant Spanish speaker revealed, "Helping my group showed me what my strengths and weaknesses are in Spanish." Hence, it appeared to the teacher-researcher that grouping students in this way revealed to the learners that what they were learning was useful and not a waste of time.

While utilizing cooperative learning strategies seemed to increase confidence and motivation, these methods were also effective for teaching vocabulary, practicing grammar, and teaching culture. However, keeping students on task required monitoring. Also, the teacher needed to be flexible and accept a certain degree of noise. It was also apparent that direct teaching of a concept was, at times, the most effective tool. Nevertheless, since students knew that their progress would be monitored by spot checks, they did manage to stay on task most of the time.

Results of the Pre- and Post- Attitudinal Surveys

Answers to the questions on the attitudinal survey seemed to validate the intervention plan. In fact, the teacher-researcher felt that there was perhaps a correlation between their positive responses to the intervention plan and the increase in enrollment and retention of students for the second semester. Table 4.3 compares the responses on the pre- and post- attitudinal survey.

Table 4.3

Attitudinal Survey of 59 Students

Note: Top numbers are pretest results.
Bottom numbers are post test results.

Attitudinal Survey of 59 Students					
Questions	Answers: Before/After in Percentages				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I want to be able to communicate effectively in Spanish.	0	6	2	45	47
	0	3	5	45	47
2. I feel that my communication ability has improved.	2	5	9	55	29
	0	5	9	54	32
3. I prefer to concentrate on listening and speaking.	0	9	13	47	31
	0	5	5	50	40
4. I prefer to continue learning grammar.	2	13	20	42	23
	0	6	14	54	26
5. I enjoy studying Spanish.	2	2	25	44	27
	0	0	20	53	27
6. Completing the performance tasks has helped improve my ability to communicate in Spanish.	0	5	24	56	15
	0	0	28	56	16
7. Keeping a binder has improved my organizational skills.	6	25	19	25	25
	15	15	25	30	15
8. Overall, there is too much work in this class.	9	13	32	26	20
	9	23	32	21	15
9. I would like to increase my vocabulary.	4	2	20	38	36
	0	0	27	40	33
10. I usually complete homework assignments on time.	4	5	29	40	22
	3	5	32	50	10
11. The 10 minute and test correction policy helped me do better on formal tests.	2	0	16	24	58
	0	0	14	28	58
12. I would rather work alone.	36	25	20	13	6
	41	20	27	9	3

Attitudinal Survey of 59 Students					
Questions	Answers: Before/After in Percentages				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
13. I do better working in cooperative groups.	9	2	22	29	38
	3	5	15	35	42
14. I try to use Spanish outside of class.	0	4	6	48	42
	0	0	4	48	48
15. I like learning about people.	5	4	29	40	22
	0	2	29	42	27
16. I prefer the presentation of vocabulary using visuals/realia.	4	9	27	38	22
	0	0	37	40	23
17. Students only take two years of a language because there is too much work.	16	21	27	22	14
	16	21	27	22	14
18. I do not expect to use Spanish in the real world.	53	34	9	2	2
	55	35	7	3	0
19. My parents and/or counselor recommend that I take four years of Spanish.	13	15	25	25	22
	13	15	25	25	22
20. My friends think that taking more than two years of Spanish is a waste of time.	24	17	24	22	13
	24	17	24	22	13

Results suggested that students felt that the development of the four language skills, as well as cultural awareness, was important. In fact, 90% of the students responded that they try to use the language outside of the classroom and 83% anticipate continuing to use Spanish in the real world. At the conclusion of the intervention, 80% of the students surveyed indicated that they enjoyed their study of Spanish.

In order to evaluate their involvement, each student compiled a binder divided to include writing samples, vocabulary and class notes, and several reflection logs. Their responses measured their involvement in cooperative group activities, their performance

on formal tests, and their perception of their language proficiency as well as the cultural information incorporated in the units. However, students had mixed feelings about the value of the binder. In fact, 50% saw little benefit to the keeping of the binder. Furthermore, without periodic checks for a grade, few students showed an interest in maintaining the binder. Nevertheless, it was evident that those who did keep the binder excelled in the four areas of language learning.

The attitudinal survey further revealed that the formation of cooperative base learning groups was an important component for accelerating second language acquisition. At the end of the intervention, 65% of the students surveyed indicated that their language skills improved more as a result of working in cooperative groups.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data, students showed an improvement in both oral and written proficiency. Moreover, students were given an opportunity to discuss "belief and behaviors". These discussions helped to develop a community of learners within the classroom. Students were given ownership, a voice in the learning process. This shift to a more learner-centered classroom required the development of multiple forms of assessment tools for reflection in an attempt to encourage self-awareness and to build connections between the standard foreign language students and the heritage learners.

Because of this shift in focus, the teacher's awareness of speaking and listening anxiety increased. While the teacher-researcher still believes that formal testing is important, two changes were necessary to increase student accountability and ease their anxiety. First, students were allowed ten minutes on the following day to add or change

any of their answers on a formal test. Secondly, they were given an opportunity to reflect on their performance when the test was being discussed (Appendix N). If they were not satisfied with their performance, they could retake the test for 80 percent. The majority of students have "strongly agreed" that this policy was beneficial. The teacher-researcher has concluded that these changes raised students' level of awareness of their role in the learning process.

Finally, another change that the teacher-researcher implemented targeted the 3-5 students who were absent on any given day. Each class had a weekly chosen recording secretary. This student was responsible for the following tasks:

- Recording in the "Big Book" the daily lesson plan that was written on the board
- Filing and later distributing handouts for absent students
- Recording oral points

Students enjoyed the status of being "secretary" and absent students found it easier to check on missing assignments and to retrieve handouts. This eliminated the excuse the reluctant learner gives, "I was absent that day". Actually, throughout this intervention it was these "small tangible steps" that had the greatest impact on academic performance.

Foreign language classrooms are generally designed for monolingual speakers of English. A number of challenges had to be met to provide appropriate instruction in a mixed classroom. The performance-based activities tended to be more open-ended which accommodated the wide range of proficiency within the classroom. Therefore, for educators desiring to increase proficiency through a more learner-centered classroom, the teacher-researcher recommends beginning slowly. It is also important to be organized

and to develop the organizational skills of the students. For this reason students were required to keep a binder. Moreover, students need to periodically review cooperative learning skills. By giving attention to these factors, student time-on-task and academic engagement will improve.

Equally important is the development of clear and effective evaluation tools. As students questioned unclear aspects of the guidelines, it became evident that the design of effective rubrics required time and effort to revise and clarify them. A collegial effort is definitely recommended. In conjunction with these rubrics, it is essential to provide exemplars, graphic organizers, and more importantly, to be specific about deadlines. The importance of these factors became clear through the review of their metacognitive activities, another key component.

The intervention appears to have increased oral and written proficiency and cultural awareness. However, it should be noted that the targeted group of students had developed a strong foundation in the targeted language. This enabled the teacher to allow the necessary time to complete the tasks and still follow the curriculum guidelines. Moreover, the majority of students began working with the teacher-researcher during the previous year, and therefore, were comfortable with the expectations and routines. A study of first or second year language students would undoubtedly provide different results.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Student Survey:
Foreign Language Proficiency & Motivation
This questionnaire is part of a research project that will provide important information about how instructors can lower anxiety and increase interest in studying a foreign language. Thank you for your participation.

Rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

A = STRONGLY DISAGREE
B = DISAGREE
C = NO OPINION
D = AGREE
E = STRONGLY AGREE

1. I want to be able to communicate effectively in Spanish.
2. I feel that my communication ability has improved.
3. I prefer to concentrate on listening & speaking.
4. I prefer to continue learning grammar.
5. I enjoy studying Spanish.
6. Completing the performance tasks has helped improve my ability to communicate in Spanish.
7. Keeping a binder has improved my organizational skills.
8. Overall, there is too much work in this class.
9. I would like to increase my vocabulary.
10. I usually complete homework assignments on time.
11. The 10 minute and test correction policy helped me do better on formal tests.
12. I would rather work alone.
13. I do better working in cooperative groups.
14. I try to use Spanish outside of class.

15. I like learning about people.
16. I prefer the presentation of vocabulary and grammar using visuals/realia.
17. Students only take 2 years of a language because there is too much work.
18. I do not expect to use Spanish in the real world.
19. My parents and/or counselor recommended that I take 4 years of Spanish.
20. My friends think that taking more than 2 years of Spanish is a waste of time.

FOCUS ON LISTENING/SPEAKING

Do you experience anxiety when you are participating in a listening activity?

_____ yes _____ no

Do you experience anxiety when you have to speak Spanish?

_____ yes _____ no

What makes you anxious when you are participating in these activities?

What types of activities, settings help to lower your anxiety level?

Appendix B
Organizational/Study Skills

A = STRONGLY DISAGREE B = DISAGREE C = NEUTRAL
D = AGREE E = STRONGLY AGREE

7. Keeping a binder has improved my organizational skills.

8. Overall, there is too much work in this class.

10. I usually complete homework assignments on time.

11. The 10 minute and test correction policy helped me to do better on formal tests.

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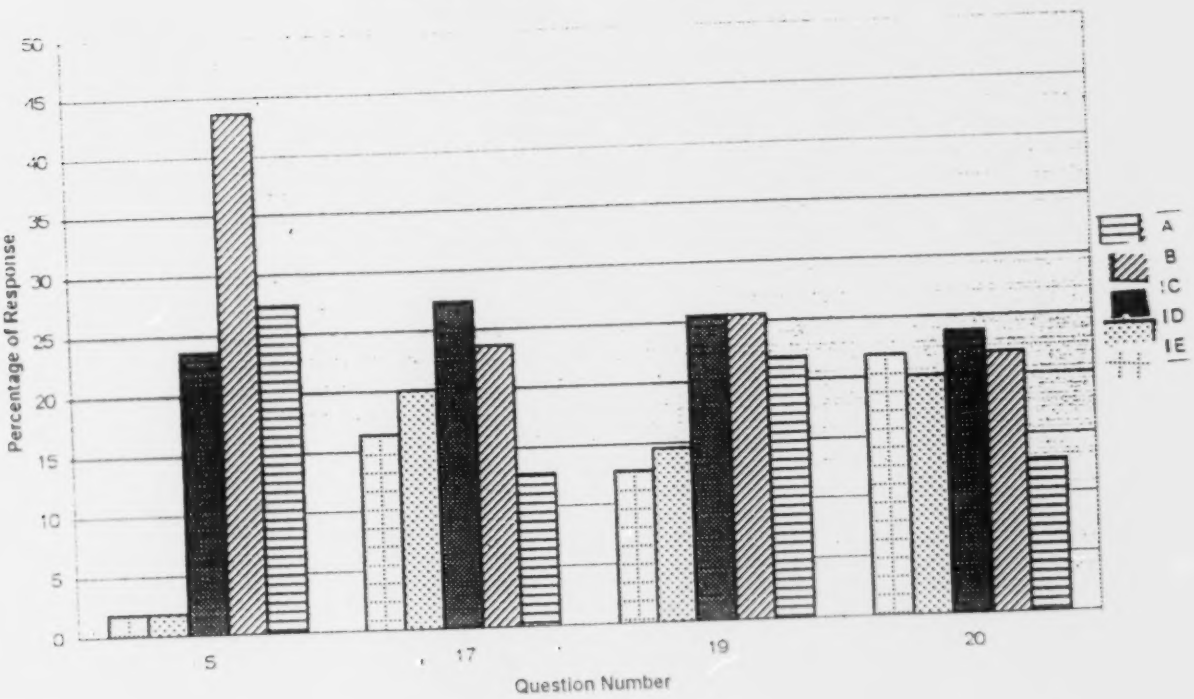
Appendix C
Perception Regarding Language Study



A = STRONGLY DISAGREE B = DISAGREE C = NEUTRAL
D = AGREE E = STRONGLY AGREE

5 I enjoy studying Spanish.

17 Students only take 2 years of a language because there is too much work.

19 My parents and/or counselor recommend that I take 4 years of Spanish.

20 My friends think that taking more than 2 years of Spanish is a waste of time.

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Appendix D
Preferred Learning Style

A = STRONGLY DISAGREE B = DISAGREE C = NEUTRAL
D = AGREE E = STRONGLY AGREE

12. I would rather work alone.

13. I do better working in cooperative groups.

16. I prefer the presentation of vocabulary and grammar using visual/realia.

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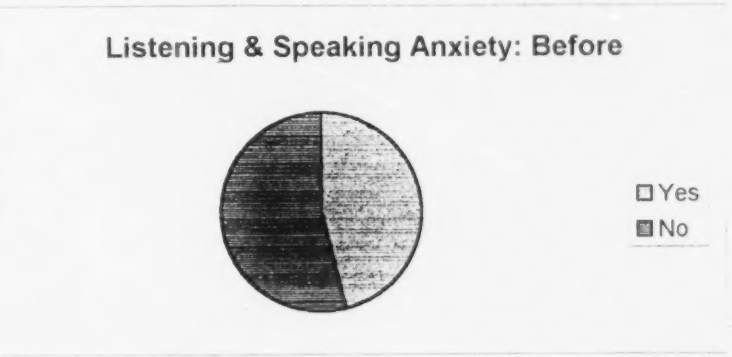
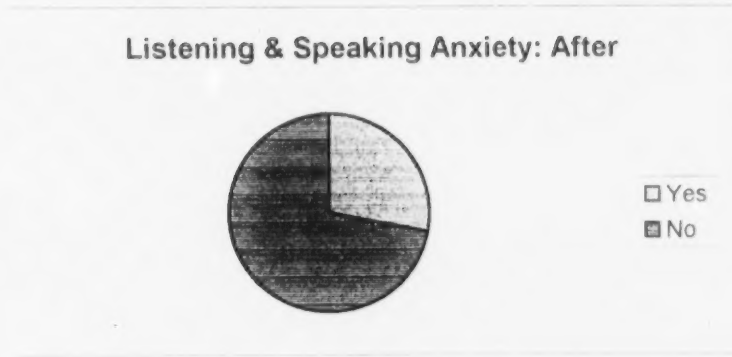
Do you experience anxiety when you are participating in a listening activity? Do you experience anxiety when you have to speak Spanish?

	Yes	No
Before	46%	54%



	Yes	No
After	28%	72%



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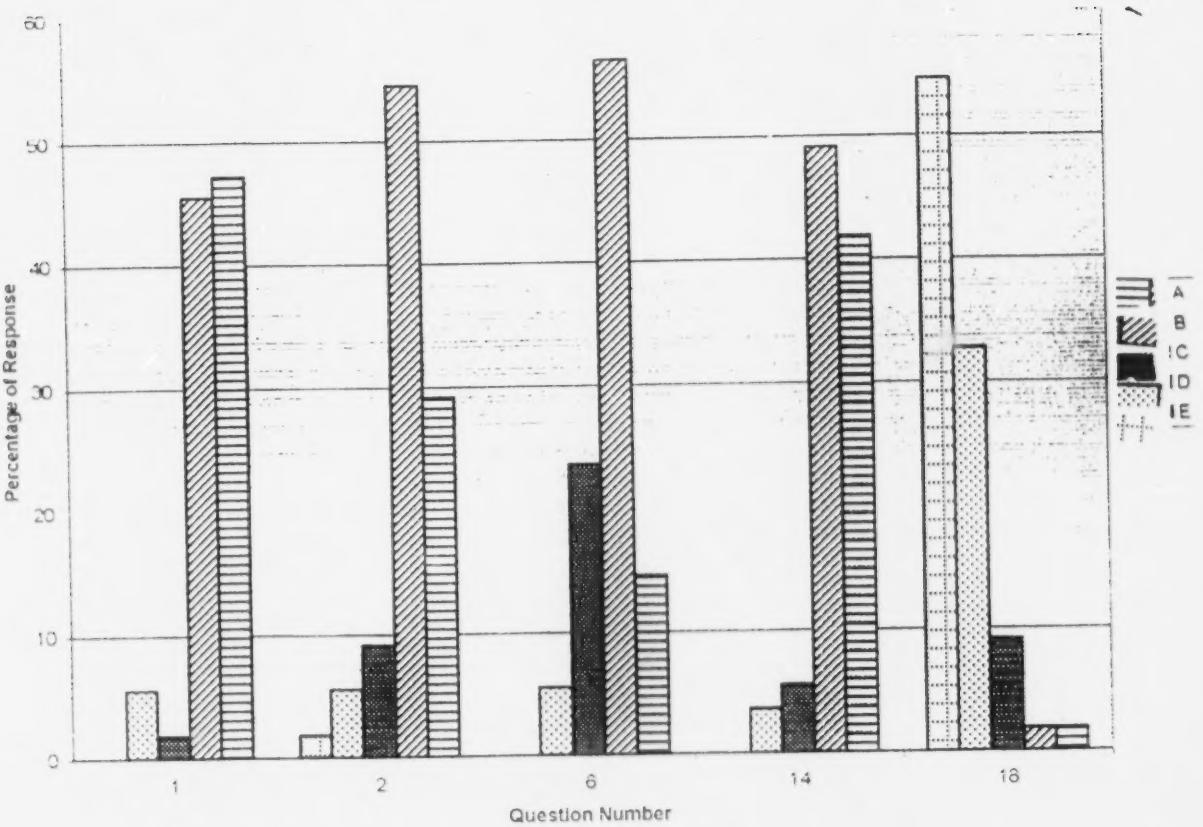
Appendix F

Interest in Real-Life Application & Second Language



A = STRONGLY DISAGREE B = DISAGREE C = NEUTRAL
D = AGREE E = STRONGLY AGREE

1. I want to be able to communicate effectively in Spanish.

2. I feel that my communication ability has improved

6. Completing the performance tasks has helped improve my ability to communicate in Spanish.

14. I try to use Spanish outside of class.

18. I do not expect to use Spanish in the real world.

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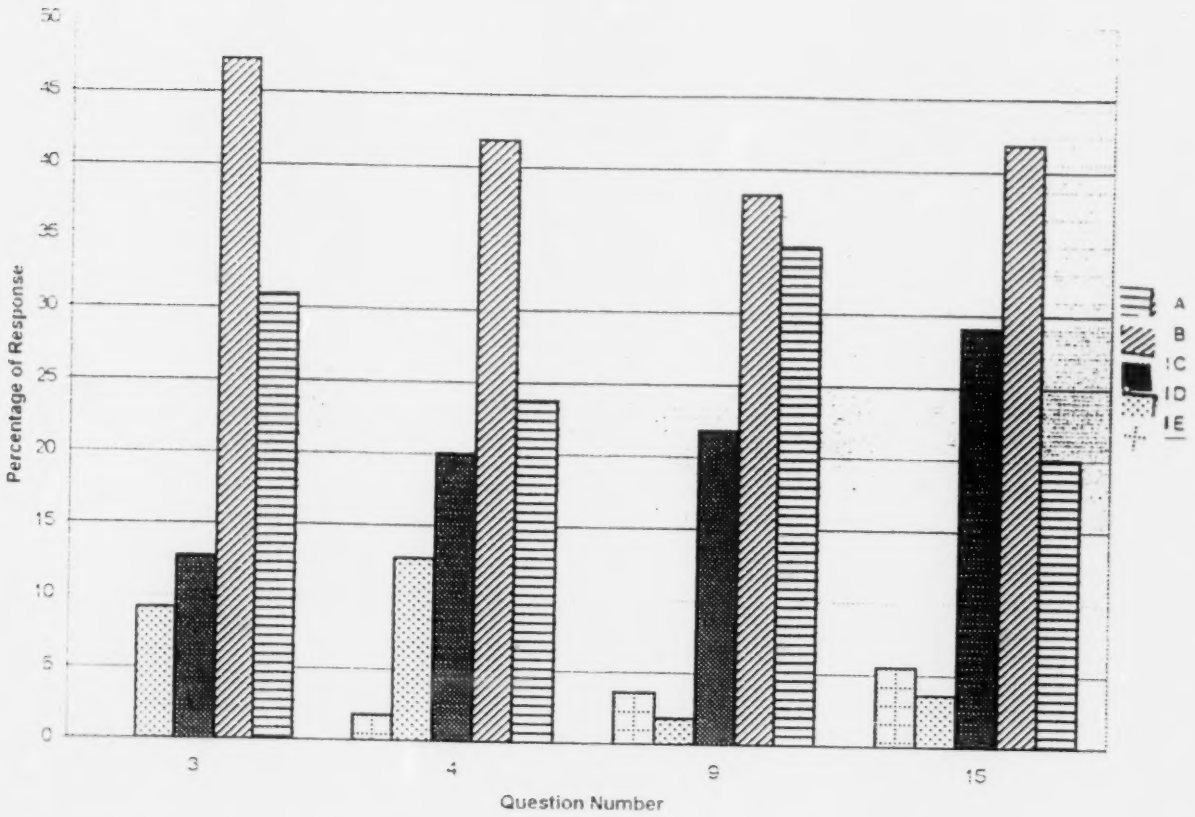
Appendix G
Preferred Area of Concentration



A = STRONGLY DISAGREE B = DISAGREE C = NEUTRAL
D = AGREE E = STRONGLY AGREE

3. I prefer to concentrate on listening and speaking.

4. I prefer to continue learning grammar.

9. I would like to increase my vocabulary.

15. I like learning about people.

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Appendix H

Results of AP Pretest of Spanish Proficiency (59 Students)

Score	Picture Sequence	Listening/ Speaking	Paragraph & Verb Fill-In	Essay	Reading
9	7	7	0	0	0
7 or 8	17	17	0	0	10
5 or 6	15	10	10	10	20
3 or 4	13	15	25	17	20
2 or 1	7	10	24	32	9
0	0	0	0	0	0

Each column reflects the number of students that scored at that level.

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Appendix I

UNA CAZERIA DE INTELIGENCIA, HUMANA

Encuentre alguien que pueda hacer lo siguiente y que ponga su nombre en la siguiente lista. Ellos deberan actuar. Usted puede usar una persona un tiempo; por eso, debe de tener diferentes personas cuando usted haga esto.

ENCUENTE UNA PERSONA QUE PUEDA . . .

_____ CANTAR UNAS LINEAS DE UNA CANCION DE MODA, " _____ ".

_____ PARAR EN UN PIE CON SUS OJOS CERRADOS POR LO MENOS DE 5 SEGUNDOS.

_____ RECITAR A MENOS DE 4 LINEAS DE UN POEMAQUE HA APRENDIDO.

_____ BAILAR LOS RITMOS DE MODA.

_____ NOMBRAR 4 ARTICULOS ESENCIALES PARA IR A ACAMPAR.

_____ DIBUJAR UN DIAGRAMA RAPIDO DE SU CASA.

_____ HA ENTRETENIDO UN GRUPO DE 20 O MAS PERSONAS EN SU CASA EN LOS ULTIMOS 6 MESES.

_____ COMPLETAR LA SUCESION NUMERICA 36,30,24, 18 Y SE PUEDE EXPLICAR LA LOGICA.

_____ DECIR QUE SE ENCUENTRA CONFORTABLE CONTANDO A P ERSONAS DURANTE ESTE EJERCICIO.

_____ CHIFLAR ALGUNAS NOTAS DEL HIMNO NACIONAL DE AMERICA

_____ NOMBRAR TRES CLASES DE FLORES.

_____ TENER CONFIANZA EN SI MISMO/A MOSTRANDO SU RECAMERA A UN INVITADO

_____ DECIR HACE CUANTO TIEMPO FUE UN MILLON DE SEGUNDOS.

_____ CONTAR ALGO AGRADABLE QUE LE PASO A EL 0 A ELLA.

_____ CERRAR LOS OJOS Y PENSAR ACERCA DEL MOMENTO MAS FELIZ DE SU VIDA. (NO TIENE QUE DECIRLO)

_____ DIBUJAR UN DIBUJO DE UN ANIMAL.

_____ CREAR UNA METAFORA O UNA COMPARACION DE ALGO.

_____ DECIR CUANTOS PIES CUBICOS HAY EN UN BANO QUE MIDE 6.5 PIES POR 9 PIES, Y TIENE UN TECHO DE 8 PIES DE ALTO.

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LESSON NAME: Certificate of Merit
CONTENT FOCUS: Present perfect tense
TARGETED SOCIAL SKILL: Listening to others with understanding & empathy
GRADE LEVEL: Spanish III/ IV

TASK FOCUS: In pairs, students will interview each other regarding past accomplishments in order to produce a certificate of merit.

PROBLEM: How to identify & express personal strengths.

ACTIVITY:

1. Use exemplar to brainstorm possible interview questions.
2. Clarify guidelines & rubric used for assessment.
3. Students draw names for interview pairs.
4. Each student interviews his partner in the target language.
5. Each student prepares a rough draft of certificate.
6. Final certificate is submitted/presented & displayed.

REFLECTION:

In past years the focus of this activity was more on content than on developing social skills. To change the emphasis, members of each cooperative base group brainstormed ways to complement the recipient of the reward. Examples included " Que bueno que ...." or "Te felicito que ...". Students also completed an observation checklist during the presentations. "Tijerillas" was the cue that students gave when they observed classmates that were not actively listening. At first, everyone laughed and felt awkward but as interest in the presentations increased the need to remind students lessened.

Another change was the classroom meeting to discuss the issue of the few students who failed to prepare a certificate. The students decided that a letter of apology should be written and as a group they encouraged the slackers to complete the task. Some students then volunteered to help those who were unprepared.

As the personal reflection logs indicate, this activity heightened self-awareness, accountability and self-esteem. And, as research has shown the cornerstone of Emotional Intelligence is a sense of self-awareness. This is essential in order for students to begin exhibiting self-control. I feel that the shift in emphasis definitely helped prepare students for " life after high school".

Appendix K

Scoring Rubric

Class: _____ Topic: _____

	5	4	3	2	1	0

Appendix L

Scoring Rubric
Communication
Descriptions for Levels of Proficiency

5 = all elements present
clearly communicates idea
creative/original
well-developed

4 = elements mostly present
communicates with small difficulty
sufficiently developed
somewhat creative

3 = some elements present/some missing
communicates idea/some difficulty
basic level of development
very little creativity

2 = elements mostly missing
great difficulty in communicating
undeveloped idea
no creativity

1 = missing/no elements
little/no communicative value
no creativity

0 = no element

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Appendix M

Editing Symbols
Foreign Language Department

- _____ = Spelling or Accent Mistake
- ◯ = Wrong form or ending
- ^ = Add word
- ¶ = New Paragraph
- ro = Run-on Sentence
- inc = Incomplete Sentence
- cap = Capitalization
- p = Punctuation
- agr = Noun/Adjective Agreement
- vf = Verb Form
- wt = Wrong Tense
- ww = Wrong Word
- wv = Wrong Verb
- wo = Word Order
- wpr = Wrong Pronoun
- wp = Wrong Place (sentence order)
- nc = Need Conclusion
- ni = Need Intro (Topic Sentence)

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Appendix N

EVALUACIÓN DE LA PRUEBA:

NOMBRE: _____

1. **IDENTIFICA LA PARTE MEJOR. Qué hiciste bien?**

2. **Identifica lo peor. Qué tienes que repasar o aprender de nuevo?**

3. **Hice _____ tan bien que _____ mejor que _____ peor que pensé que iba a hacer.**

4. **Aquí hay dos errores que siempre he hecho muchas veces. Voy a prestar más atención la próxima vez.**

   a.

   b.

5. **Me alegra con:**

6. **Pienso que esta prueba me preguntó lo que debía saber.**

   _____ SÍ! _____ NO!

   Si has contestado que no, explica porque.

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